

# Atacama Trekking Expedition



## Highlights

The Atacama Desert awaits you! Spend 7 days trekking in the one of the driest places on earth. The Atacama Desert is now notorious as the site of the copper mine collapse in 2010, when 33 trapped miners were eventually freed after two months underground. This is a vast and unforgiving landscape, but, with the help of a guide and all meals and accommodation sorted for you, all you have to do is concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other...

Why is the Sahara the only desert ever talked about? Cross the Atlantic and find yourself in the Atacama: the driest and oldest desert in the world. It covers an area of over 40,000 square miles. It's 50 times drier than California's Death Valley. Some areas are thought to have received no rainfall for hundreds of years. In this 600-mile sliver of land only the spiny giant cacti flourish. Few other living beings can tolerate the incessant drought-like climate. However, those who can are rewarded with a landscape like no other. Salt dunes, silent river beds, jagged rocks and rusty coloured skies all conspire to give an impression of an alien land.

Aside from the wonderful views you'll be granted while you're on this Atacama trekking expedition, the highlight of this walk may just lie in the sense of achievement you will feel when you finally reach day seven. The real gem is to be found on the fifth day: The Puritama Hot Springs. Plunge into waters of 30°C temperatures and relax your muscles while gazing out across desert mountains. You might just never want to leave.

## Is it for me?

Trekking in the Atacama Desert requires more physical preparation than for most other vacations. On this trip you will be trekking between five to seven hours a day for 4 continuous days in high altitudes, mostly on dry sandy terrain. On the fourth day the trail will run into the high lands (average 4,100m / 10,500ft). Guides will always have oxygen tanks on hand if someone feels sick.

Bear in mind is that the temperatures in Atacama change dramatically from day to night following a typical desert pattern of hot day/cool night (check When Is Best). Altogether these conditions might affect both the body and the morale so it is important to come in good physical condition in order to get the most out of this stunning trek through the Atacama Desert.

There is one guide to every four trekkers. Maximum group size is ten people.

## Accommodation

Accommodation on this tour is 3 nights in a hotel and 3 nights camping. The hotel of choice is the 3 star Hotel Poblado Kimal. This hotel offers self-contained bedrooms in funky wooden bungalows. The rooms are clean and comfortable, each with their own bathroom and terrace.

The tents arranged for this programme are typical mountain tents with enough room for 2 people. All the camping gear is provided except for sleeping mats and sleeping bags (please ask for mats and bags rental rates). The guides will be responsible for setting up the tents in the camping site. There will also be a big dining tent for dinners and breakfasts.

Most meals are included except for breakfast on the first day and lunch and dinner on the last day. Expect hearty meals to keep you going.

Prices from  
**1,217** GBP (7 days) per person

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## Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrival in San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

Arrive at Calama's Airport and drive to San Pedro de Atacama. As you drive you can appreciate the impressive rock formations of the Cordillera de la Sal, which is the entrance to one of the most special areas of Chile. Once in San Pedro enjoy a briefing lunch. In the afternoon, do your first hike in Valle de la Luna. You'll walk over sand dunes until you reach the point from where you'll witness a beautiful sunset. Then it's back to town for an overnight stay in San Pedro.

### Day 2: From San Pedro to San Bartolo, Atacama Desert, Chile

After breakfast, board the minibus to the great Fortress of Quitor, which dates from the twelfth century and reveals the pre-Inca architecture in the region of Atacama. Then you'll start a walk to the mouth of River San Pedro. You'll finally enter a small valley that you cross to reach the ghost town of San Bartolo, a former mining enclave, now abandoned. Camp here for the night.

### Day 3: From San Bartolo to Rio Grande, Atacama Desert, Chile

Start the day with a demanding trek from the riverbed and up to plateau level. The trail continues through the river canyon and you'll start to see giant cactuses that emerge from the arid and barren desert. There are some areas of the valley that are so dry that scientists have not found life there yet, not even bacteria. After crossing a section of the canyon you'll arrive at Rio Grande Village, one of the few original indigenous communities of Atacameño people that still remain. Camp on the banks of the river.

### Day 4: From Rio Grande to Machuca, Atacama Desert, Chile

Today is the most challenging day of the trek. Once you finish breakfast you'll start trekking towards Machuca Village. The trail continues along the course of small streams that give form to narrow and beautiful valleys inhabited by native people and their herds of llamas. Continue gaining altitude as you border steep desert canyons, until you reach the awesome bofedales of Machuca, over-water grass lands full of wildlife. From here you'll enjoy an amazing view of Licancabur Volcano, the sacred mountain of the Atacameño people. At this point you'll be over 13.000ft above sea level. Camp next to a big bofedal and rest up as you acclimatise to the Altiplanic weather.

### Day 5: From Machuca to Puritama, Atacama Desert, Chile

After a hearty breakfast, leave the bofedales of Machuca and start descending through the canyon. Arrive finally at the natural pools of Puritama Hot Springs. When your body and mind are rested, you'll drive back to San Pedro.

### Day 6: The Cherry of Atacama? San Pedro, Salt Flat and High Land Lagoons, Atacama, Chile

As a reward for your efforts so far, you'll be transferred by minibus to see the amazing Salar de Atacama, home of astonishing birds like the Chilean Pink Flamingos. Then you'll continue on towards the "cherry" of Atacama: the marvelous Miscanti and Miñiques Lagoons. Once ready, you'll head back to San Pedro. Tonight you'll enjoy a farewell dinner.

### Day 7: Departure from San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

Today is a relaxing day, and you can spend it wandering around the town, visiting craft shops, churches and museums. In the afternoon you'll head to Calama's Airport in time to catch your flight.

## Details

### Getting there

Flying to Chile or Argentina... Fly into Santiago de Chile or Buenos Aires Argentina. LAN is an excellent airline with departure gates in Miami, New York, Los Angeles, Madrid and Frankfurt. Air France, British Airways & Lufthansa are the big European airlines flying to Chile. From Santiago or Buenos Aires you need to fly on to Calama El Loa Airport (CJC).

**Joining instructions** The trip starts in the morning in Calama Airport - last pick-up time is at 12:30pm. The trip finishes in Calama Airport and we suggest booking flights departing after 5.00pm.

### Price includes

English-speaking guide; all private transportation as indicated in the itinerary; 3 nights in San Pedro hotel; 3 nights camping; all meals except breakfast on Day 1 and lunch and dinner on the Day 7.

Price quoted is per person based on 4 people sharing. Prices differ depending on group size.

Are you a solo traveller? Contact us ([help@tourdust.com](mailto:help@tourdust.com)) to tell you which departures we have already confirmed.

### When is best

Spring-Summer (October to March)

Farther north, in Atacama, the weather varies, and follows a desert hot-day / cold-night pattern. On a sunny day, daytime temperatures can be very pleasant, ranging between 15°C - 20°C (low 60s and low 70s F). Nighttime temperatures will most likely be in the 0°C - 5°C (23s and 40s F)

Autumn-Winter (April to September)

In Atacama the weather varies following the mentioned desert warm-day / cold-night pattern. On a sunny day, daytime temperatures can be pleasant, ranging again between 13°C - 20°C (low 60s and low 70s F). Nighttime temperatures will most likely be in the -10°C - 0°C (23s and 40s F). The Atacama Desert is the driest place on

**Earth! Don't expect rain at all – if it rains when you are there you might consider it a miracle!**

**Comfort level**

**Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)**

**Experience required**

**A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed**